

United States Census Bureau

How Do We Know?

Child Care an Important Part of American Life

Families rely on a patchwork of child care services to meet their work and family needs. Data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) helps us understand child care usage among families.

32.7 Million Children in Care Arrangements

In 2011, 32.7 million children were in a regular child care arrangement while their parents worked or pursued other activities outside of the home.

12.5M Preschoolers (ages 0-4)

61% A greater percentage of preschoolers participated in child care compared to grade schoolers.

20.2M Grade Schoolers (ages 5-14)

50% Percentage of grade schoolers who participate in a regular child care arrangement.

Who's Minding the Kids?

Increases in the number of working mothers and the desire to provide young children with educational opportunities have driven up the demand for various types of child care. Relatives regularly provide care for preschoolers.

Relatives 27% (One in five relatives who provided care was a grandparent.)

Organized facilities 25%

Parents 22%

Other nonrelative 13%

Other 13%

49% Parents and relatives make up half of all preschool child care arrangements.

Definitions

Relatives - grandparents, siblings, and other relatives.

Organized Facilities - day care or child care centers, nursery schools, preschools, and Head Start programs.

Parents - fathers who provided care while the mother worked or mothers who provided care while working.

Other nonrelative - in-home babysitters, neighbors, friends, and family day care homes.

Other - school, self care, and no regular arrangement.

Preschoolers of employed moms 88%

Preschoolers with employed moms are more likely to be in care.

Preschoolers of nonemployed moms 28%

Employed moms 36 hours

On average, preschoolers of employed mothers spend 15 hours per week more in child care than preschoolers with nonemployed mothers.

Non-employed moms 21 hours

Married Fathers Are More Likely to Provide Care if they Are Not Employed or Work Part-Time

Not employed Preschoolers 55%

Not employed Grade Schoolers 17%

Part-time Preschoolers 38%

Part-time Grade Schoolers 9%

Full-time Preschoolers 16%

Full-time Grade Schoolers 6%

55% More than half of fathers not employed, with employed wives, are primary care providers for their children under 5.

Child Care Payments

Out-of-pocket costs for child care nearly doubled in the last quarter century. However, the percentage of families paying for child care has declined since the late 1990s.

Weekly Average Child Care Payments For Families With Employed Mothers: 1985-2011

Adjusted for inflation

1985 - \$84

1986 - \$91

1987 - \$96

1988 - \$103

1990 - \$103

1991 - \$105

1993 - \$109

1997 - \$104

1999 - \$107

2002 - \$119
2005 - \$124
2010 - \$142
2011 - \$143

Families with younger children spend more on child care. The average weekly payment for a preschooler is **\$179** versus **\$93** for grade schoolers.

Percent of Families with Employed Mothers Who Make Child Care Payments: 1985-2011

1985 – 34%
1986 – 31%
1987 – 33%
1988 – 40%
1990 – 38%
1991 – 35%
1993 – 35%
1997 – 42%
1999 – 41%
2002 – 36%
2005 – 35%
2010 – 32%
2011 – 32%

Since 1997, the percentage of families paying for care has decreased from 42 percent to 32 percent.

Families Below the Federal Poverty Line Spent Roughly Four Times the Percentage of Their Income on Child Care as Other Families

Families in poverty 30%

Families not in poverty 8%

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United States Department of Commerce

Economic and Statistics Division

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Data collected from the 1996, 2001, 2004, and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)

For more information, visit www.census.gov/how/infographics/sources.html

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